



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Education Continuation Task Force

SUMMARY

MEETING DATE: MARCH 30, 2020

ATTENDANCE: Jon Akers, Melissa Biggerstaff, Rhonda Caldwell, Eddie Campbell, Tonya Crum, Kathy Fields, Jim Flynn, Brooke Gill, Ronda Harmon, Jeff Hawkins, Nancy Hutchinson, Mary Ann Jennings, David Johnson, Eric Kennedy, Brian Lovell, Leon Mooneyhan, Martin Monson, Ronnie Nolan, O.J. Oleka, Stephen Pruitt, Brigitte Blom Ramsey, Amy Razor, Mary Pat Regan, Jackie Ridsen-Smith, Mary Ruble, John Settle, Julian Tackett, Benjamin Wilcox

SUMMARY:

Agenda Item: Welcome

Presenter: Kevin C. Brown, Interim Commissioner and Karen Dodd, Chief Performance Officer

Summary of Discussion and Feedback:

Karen Dodd called roll and reviewed the task force's purpose statement. This purposed of this group is collaboration and feedback regarding "just in time" guidance for districts. The task force will not make decisions on action items.

Commissioner Kevin Brown thanked all participants for their help in providing guidance to districts. In response to COVID-19, KDE is committed to providing guidance and solutions that focus on feeding and educating our children and providing support to our districts. Things the group should be aware of:

- KDE held a superintendents' webcast on Friday, March 27, with over 300 listeners logged on.
- The [KDE COVID-19 page](#) and [email address](#) have launched. This is a repository for education related issues and is not intended to replace [Kentucky's main site](#) for medical information.
- A special superintendents' webcast will be held tomorrow from 2-4 E.T. to issues related to special education. There will be at least one superintendents' webcast per week. Another special webcast will be held on April 7 to address funding issues.
- The federal CARES act passed last week, which provide COVID-19 impact relief to states. SREB provided the estimate that Kentucky was on track to receive \$197 million from portions of that act.

- KDE will be asking the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) to waive some relevant regulations impacted by COVID-19. KDE will take advantage of executive orders issued by the governor as well.
- Commissioner Brown issued a call to action for partners to think differently about the supports they provide.

Agenda Item: Duration of Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI)

Presenters: Dr. Kelly Foster, Associate Commissioner and David Cook, Division Director

Summary of Discussion and Feedback:

The task force was updated on the most recent NTI information, since most members do not work with NTI daily. The following was shared:

- Districts have been asked to prepare six weeks of NTI instruction to last until May 1. Currently the governor has asked schools to remain closed until April 20.
- David Cook and his staff are in daily contact with superintendents and district NTI points of contact.
- Questions are slowing down as guidance has been shared and districts are getting into a groove with their NTI programs.

KDE is starting to collect evidence of best practices so they can be shared and replicated. Characteristics of a strong NTI program include:

- Programs are teacher led; online platforms are a support resource and don't replace the teacher. Teachers are interacting with individual students and groups of students.
- Learning is student centered, personalized and allows student choice.
- Technology is used as a support for delivery of content but is not the only medium used.
- Learning occurs through project-based learning. Project-based learning allows districts to focus on performance over seat time.
- Participation focuses on performance and progress on assignments, not the amount of time spent on tasks.

Comments and questions from the meeting chat were addressed.

Question: Can you share anything about how educators are reaching students who have limited internet and/or limited devices to support online interaction/learning?

Answer: When there's limited or no digital access, it's important for teachers to interact with students at least once a week to determine how students are progressing. Marty Park, Office of Education Technology, shared that there are also many community-based strategies being developed district by district for helping connect families digitally to further close that digital connectivity gap.

Comment: Some difficulty with phone conversations has been reported. Parents who were issued government phones don't want to use the minutes for school.

Answer: This is something to consider as we move forward. Task force members will work with CHFS to determine whether minutes could be increased.

Comment: Some communities are working on ways to alleviate the lack of digital access.

Question: Does NTI include ways for support staff such as counselors and FRYSCs to provide services?

Answer: The NTI regulation doesn't address this. Districts must find ways for support staff to connect with students they were working with prior to school closure. This is a district decision. Two webinars for school counselors can be found [here](#).

Comment: Numerous concerns have been expressed about parent and student fatigue setting in if NTI continues long term.

Comment: Districts are worried about transmitting COVID-19 through the exchange of NTI packets with families.

Comment: There are many families who are still working, some with multiple jobs, and are not able to provide NTI support to their children at home.

Comment: Superintendents are asking if there is flexibility in reaching 1,062 instructional hours since there is no scheduled non-instructional time, as there is during a normal school day.

Comment: One of the things we are working on in our district is engaging our CTE classes/FBLA/FFA to assist local businesses in developing a social media/web presence. The work is all done remotely by phone, Zoom, Hangout, etc. Students are developing phone apps, free websites and other resources. Daily updates help keep a finger on the pulse of student work. We are looking at ways to have WBL using the CDC guidance and operate within the "real world" constraints. Students without web connectivity are working on tasks such as logging calls and outreach efforts from a distance. This is just an idea for the group to consider.

Resource shared: Dr. Stephen Pruitt, Executive Director of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) shared an [online resource](#) on their website.

Commissioner Brown acknowledged the concern over fatigue. This issue could not have been foreseen and is something we are grappling with in the state education system. If NTI extends, it may transition to a "Phase 2," with a revised way of learning through enrichment or KET. Also under consideration is whether fatigued activities and learning are better than none at all.

Mr. Cook explained the importance of quality over quantity when assigning NTI work. Some of the fatigue may be caused by assigning too much work. Again, this is why project-based learning is a great option.

Commissioner Brown wants districts to use NTI as the same number of instructional minutes as a normal school day. Further flexibility may be necessary in the future, but for now keep NTI instructional days as is.

Comment: Districts must be sure to involve the foster care system when planning NTI instruction. The system is still running, and foster students are being placed. Plans must be made for the students who are enrolling in the district for the first time.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: High School Graduation Requirements, Options and Recommendations

Presenter: Dr. Amanda Ellis, Associate Commissioner

Summary of Discussion and Feedback:

Dr. Amanda Ellis reviewed the current requirements for high school graduation. The state requires 22 credits distributed in the following way:

- Four credits: English/language arts
- Three credits: Mathematics – Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II
- Three credits: Science
- Three Credits: Social Studies
- One credit: Visual/performing arts
- 1/2 credit: Health
- 1/2 credit: Physical Education
- Seven elective credits

Most districts require additional credits for students to graduate, such as personal finance courses. Dr. Ellis would like feedback from the task force on two options under consideration.

Option 1: Ask districts to waive their requirements that go beyond the state minimum of 22 credits needed for graduation. This option would involve local boards only and no action would need to be taken by the KBE.

Option 2: Modify the state minimum to require 15 credits for graduation, waiving the seven elective credits. Students would only be required to complete the core courses. This option would require local board and action and KBE action.

Dr. Ellis asked the group members to vote for their preferred option for feedback purposed only, as no action is taken through this task force. Votes recorded in the chat reflect 11 votes for option one and seven votes for option two.

There was discussion among task force members about the civics test, which is a statutory requirement for graduation starting in 2020. Districts have several options about how students complete the requirement. There has been discussion about the governor waiving the requirement through executive order for students who are not able to complete the test due to access who would have otherwise graduated. Through the group chat, several task force members suggested that a blanket waiver for all students would make implementation easier for districts. Dr. Ellis informed the group that most seniors have already passed the civics test.

Additional comments and discussion that occurred through chat:

- Question: Do we know how many seniors already have the required 22 credits to graduation? Answer: Not at this time; that would require extensive digging in Infinite Campus (IC).
- Rhonda Caldwell, Executive Director of the Kentucky Association for School Administrators (KASA), would like to poll principals about how many seniors have already earned the required 22 credits. Dr. Ellis welcomed the opportunity for that feedback and will work out the details with Ms. Caldwell.
- Concern was expressed about the difficulty in getting all the local boards together to amend their graduation requirements for this year.
- Concern was expressed over seniors being able to meet college admissions requirements. Dr. Pruitt informed task force members that several southern colleges and universities are waiving some of the admission requirements, even the ACT in some cases.

- David Horseman, Associate Commissioner, informed the task force members that KCTCS is not going to use pass/fail grading so credits can be transferred to colleges and universities.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Think About Top Four Topics to be Communicated This Week

Presenter: Karen Dodd, Chief Performance Officer and Brooke Gill, Director of Engagement for the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

Summary of Discussion and Feedback:

Brooke Gill shared [The Groundswell Weekly Resource](#), which was created to offer a simple toolbox of ideas for families and professionals as they adjust to all that comes with supporting children during at-home learning. The resource currently serves four audiences, families with young children, families with middle-college aged children, educators and community engagement professionals. The Prichard Committee has offered to add districts as a fifth audience so we can highlight what this task force thinks districts need to know.

Positive feedback about this resource was shared through the group chat. Ms. Dodd will coordinate with Ms. Gill to provide weekly content for the district portion. Possible resources shared with districts in the coming weeks include [NTI best practices](#), important webcasts, guiding questions for districts to consider, school counselor webinars and [KDE's COVID-19](#) site.

The resource is currently only available electronically, but print options are being explored. The Prichard Committee distributes the resource to their email lists every Friday. KDE will share the district portion with relevant audiences and through social media. Task force members are encouraged to share with their audiences as well to ensure consistency in our communication efforts.

Agenda Item: Review and Adjournment

Presenter: Kevin Brown, Interim Commissioner of Education

Summary of Discussion and Feedback:

Commissioner Brown reviewed the key takeaways from this meeting:

- The fatigue issue remains a top priority for continued exploration of options.
- Clarity is needed on options for the civics test.
- Priority topics for districts will be provided for the Prichard Committee's resource.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2020, 1-3 E.T. Group members should send feedback or questions to [Commissioner Brown](#) or [Karen Dodd](#).